

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 IO-14 AID-20 PC-10 DRC-01 /140 W

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R 161805Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0270

INFO CINCSO

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SANTO DOMINGO 1547/1

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DOMINICAN POLITICS ONE MONTH BEFORE THE ELECTION

REF: SD 1338

1. SUMMARY. THE DOMINICAN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN HAS FAILED THUS FAR TO BRING INTO FOCUS CLEARLY-DEFINED NATIONAL ISSUES. PRESIDENT BALAGUER APPEARS INTENT ON STANDING ON HIS OWN REMARK-ABLE RECORD OF EIGHT YEARS OF INCREASING POLITICAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH. IN CONTRAST, THE BADLY DIVIDED OPPOSITION HAS BEEN UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO AGREE ON A COMMON PLATFORM, CONTENTING ITSELF LARGELY WITH DEMOGOGIC AND GENERALLY UNCONSTRUCTIVE DIATRIBES AGAINST THE BALAGUER ADMINISTRATION. THIS SITUATION HAS FURTHER CONTRIBUTED TO THE CURRENT VOTER APATHY TOWARD THE CAMPAIGN, A STRIKING CONTRAST TO VOTER ATTITUDES IN PREVIOUS DOMINICAN ELECTIONS SINCE TRUJILLO'S ASSASSINATION. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH ONLY FIVE WEEKS REMAINING BEFORE THE MAY 16 NATIONAL ELECTIONS, THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN OF CANDIDATES REPRESENTING BOTH THE GODR AND THE OPPOSITION HAVE BEEN THUS FAR SURPRISINGLY DEVOID OF FOCUS ON CLEARLY-DEFINED ISSUES.

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3. TO DATE, THE OPPOSITION CANDIDATES, IN THEIR PUBLIC

PRONOUNCEMENTS, HAVE GENERALLY REFRAINED FROM ADVOCATING SPECIFIC GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS, LIMITING THEMSELVES LARGELY TO ATTACKS ON THE BALAGUER GOVERNMENT. THE PRINCIPAL TARGETS OF THE OPPOSITION THUS FAR HAVE BEEN THE ISSUES OF CONTINUISMO, THE HIGH COST OF LIVING, RELEASE OF SO-CALLED POLITICAL PRISONERS, RETURN OF EXILES FROM ABROAD, AND ALLEGED OFFICIAL CORRUPTION. THESE ATTACKS HAVE BEEN CHARACTERIZED GENERALLY BY THEIR NEGATIVISM WITH LITTLE EFFORT BEING PUT FORTH TO OFFER CONSTRUCTIVE SOLUTIONS TO SOME OF THE COUNTRY'S MAJOR PROBLEMS SUCH AS INFLATION, LAGGING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, HEALTH, ETC. INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, E.G., RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., CUBA, THE OAS, ETC., HAVE BEEN VIRTUALLY IGNORED BY ALL CANDIDATES THUS FAR IN THE CAMPAIGN AND IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THEY WILL GENERATE ANY PARTICULAR INTEREST IN THIS ESSENTIALLY INWARD LOOKING COUNTRY.

4. PRESIDENT BALAGUER, WHO FORMALLY ACCEPTED RENOMINATION FOR PRESIDENT ON MARCH 29 (SD-1330) HAS SINCE THEN MADE ONLY ONE CAMPAIGN SPEECH, AN 18-MINUTE RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCAST ON APRIL 9 IN SUPPORT OF THE REFORMIST CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR (SINDICO) OF THE NATIONAL DISTRICT, JUAN ESTRELLA ROJAS. IT APPEARS THAT BALAGUER WILL CAMPAIGN ON THE BASIS OF HIS UNDENIABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THE PAST EIGHT YEARS. HIS SUPPORTERS' CAMPAIGN SLOGAN IS, "WHY CHANGE A GOOD THING?" ("LO BUENO NO SE CAMBIA"). AS HE SET FORTH IN HIS MARCH 29 ACCEPTANCE SPEECH, BALAGUER WILL ALSO PROBABLY STRESS THE "TRANSITIONAL" NATURE OF THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION, DESIGNED, IN HIS WORDS, TO CONVERT THE COUNTRY FROM A "CIRCUMSTANTIAL DEMOCRACY INTO A FUNCTIONAL AND TRULY OPERATIVE DEMOCRACY."

5. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT BALAGUER IS ENTERING THE FINAL WEEKS OF THE CAMPAIGN IN A STRONG POSITION. HIS REFORMIST PARTY IS, BY DOMINICAN STANDARDS AT LEAST, RELATIVELY UNITED AND COHESIVE, WITH THE ARMED FORCES AND NATIONAL POLICE, ALTHOUGH NOMINALLY AND CONSTITUTIONALLY APOLITICAL, SOLIDLY BEHIND HIS CANDIDACY, AND WITH THE PARTY'S FINANCIAL AND OTHER MATERIAL RESOURCES ABUNDANT. NOT LEAST OF ALL, THE REMARKABLE AND SOLID ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PAST EIGHT YEARS, DESPITE NOTABLE SHORTCOMINGS, OFFER THE VOTER TANGIBLE

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EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY WHEN COMPARED WITH THE UNSTABLE AND BLEAK ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION BALAGUER INHERITED FROM THE GARCIA GODOY PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT IN 1966.

6. THE OPPOSITION, ON THE OTHER HAND, ENTERS THE FINAL STAGES OF THE CAMPAIGN SEEMINGLY HOPELESSLY DIVIDED. JUAN BOSCH'S SO-CALLED NATIONAL DIGNITY BLOC IS FOR ALL INTENTS

AND PURPOSES DEFUNCT AND ITS FORMER COMPONENTS SCATTERED, DEMORALIZED, AND/OR POLITICALLY NEUTRALIZED. THE LORA-AMIAMA TI6 (MIDA-GIAT) SLATE IS EXPERIENCING OVIDENT DIFFICULTIES IN GETTING ITS CAMPAIGN OFF THE GROUND AND THERE IS WIDESPREAD SPECULATION THAT AMIAMA, SENSING A POLITICAL ROUT AT THE POLLS, WILL ULTIMATELY ABANDON THE TICKET PRIOR TO ELECTIONS.

7. THE REAL POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE TO BALAGUER THUS DEVOLVES ON THE SELF-STYLED FOUR PARTY SANTIAGO ACCORD GROUP WHICH ITSELF IS INCREASINGLY BESET WITH INTERNAL PROBLEMS GENERATED IN LARGE PART BY THE INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS OF ITS POLITICAL MAKEUP. FOR EXAMPLE, MANY IN THE DOMINICAN REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PRD), BACKBONE OF THE ACCORD, RESENT THE VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY OF THE ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE, POLITICALLY-INEPT EX-GENERAL HIFAS WESSIN Y WESSIN WHO, THEY REMEMBER, WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN THE OVERTHROW OF THE PRD GOVERNMENT IN 1963. FURTHERMORE, CERTAIN SECTORS WITHIN THE PRD ARE ALSO DISPLEASED WITH THE NOMINATION OF FORMER MIDA VICE PRESIDENT GUARIONEX LLUBERES MONTAS AS THE ACCORD'S

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NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

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R 161805Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0271

INFO CINCSO

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SANTO DOMINGO 1547/2

CANDIDATE FOR SINDICO OF THE NATIONAL DISTRICT, HOLDING THAT LLUBERES' BLATANT OPPORTUNISTIC SHIFTING OF PARTIES HAS DEPRIVED A PRD PARTY STALWART OF THAT KEY POSITION. THE RELATIVELY CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP OF THE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIAL

CHRISTIAN PARTY (PRSC), MOREOVER, IS SOMEWHAT UNCOMFORTABLE WITH SEVERAL OF THE PRD'S MORE NATIONALISTIC PLANKS (NATIONALIZATION OF FOREIGN ENTERPRISES, BANKS, ETC.) WHILE EVEN MORE WARY OF TOO CLOSE AN ALLIANCE WITH ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE ACCORD, THE EXTREME LEFTIST DOMINICAN POPULAR MOVEMENT (MPD). THE QUISQUEYAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PQD) LIKEWISE IS DIVIDED BETWEEN ITS PROGRESSIVE WING IN SANTIAGO AND ITS CONSERVATIVE WING IN THE CAPITAL, THE FORMER OF WHICH IS PRIVATELY COOL TO THE IDEA OF WESSIN'S RETURN FROM ABROAD. ONE EVIDENT RESULT OF THESE DIVISIONS IS THAT THE ACCORD IS PATENTLY UNABLE TO AGREE ON A COMMON PLATFORM.

8. NOTEWORTHY IN THIS CAMPAIGN IS THE RELATIVE ABSENCE OF DIFFERENCES IN IDEOLOGICAL TERMS SEPARATING THE PRINCIPAL CANDIDATES, WHO RANGE FROM SLIGHTLY LEFT OF CENTER IN THE CASE OF GUZMAN TO CONSIDERABLY RIGHT OF CENTER IN THE CASE OF LORA. THIS LARGELY CENTRIST-RIGHT ORIENTATION OF THE MAIN CANDIDATES IS REFLECTIVE OF BOTH THE INEPTITUDE AND DISARRAY OF THE LEFT AND OF THE GENERALLY CONSERVATIVE AND COMPLACENT CURRENT MOOD OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, A SHARP
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CONTRAST TO THE REVOLUTIONARY TEMPER WHICH UNSETTLED THE COUNTRY IN THE YEARS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE COLLAPSE OF THE TRUJILLO REGIME. THE REAL CONTEST IN THIS ELECTION IS BETWEEN PERSONALITIES WITH A TYPICALLY DOMINICAN TRADITIONAL POLITICAL OUTLOOK, AND NOT PARTIES, IDEAS OR PLATFORMS.

9. THE ABSENCE OF REAL ISSUES IN THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN AS WELL AS THE WIDELY-CONCEDED ELECTORAL VICTORY OF PRESIDENT BALAGUER HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO A GENERAL VOTER APATHY TOWARD THE CAMPAIGN WHICH CONTRASTS WITH DOMINICAN ELECTIONS SINCE TRUJILLO'S ASSASSINATION IN 1961. NONETHELESS, WITH THE END OF HOLY WEEK, APRIL 15, THE TEMPO OF THE CAMPAIGN IS EXPECTED BY SOME TO INCREASE.
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